THE ANCIENT ART

Once upon a time, a long time ago, there were people who believed in laughter, joy and love. They believed in many deities, but the most important to them was their Great Mother Goddess. They believed in and lived with the powers of Nature. They reveled in the Wind, the Rain, the Snow and the Sunlight. They marveled at and revered the changing of the seasons and saw therein great excitement and wisdom to be gained. They knew that if they tended, cared for and loved the Earth, in return She would provide for, care for and love them. They saw that all around them the world was filled with Life, much as their own but in many different and wonderful forms. They felt the life of the flowers, plants and trees and respected them for that life essence. They looked about and observed all the many types of animals and saw that they were kindred to them and loved them. They felt and observed the great Love of the Goddess all about them and knew kinship with the Moon. They were practioners of The Old Religion, worshipers of The Great Mother.

Witch! The very word instantly invokes visions for each of us, visions which vary greatly from individual to individual. Many of these visions, however, are quite false, brought about by many centuries of severe persecutions, mis-representations, prejudice and, in recent years, lack of knowledge. Witchcraft! What is it really?

Witchcraft is the oldest, most irrepressible religion in the world because it stimulates the intellect, promotes a simple, practical way of life and, most importantly, is emotionally satisfying. Its roots lie in the ancient Matriarchal systems of Goddess worship. A religion of Nature in which the primary deity is female (The Essence of Femininity, The Earth Mother, The Great Mother, etc.).

It was easy for the Wise Ones to look at the world around them and see the great importance of Feminine Principle. The female was, indeed, the one who bore the young, perhaps the most magickal of all events to ancient man. Then, she played by far the most important role in rearing the young, being totally responsible for feeding, for without her milk there was no life past birth. She was responsible for the teaching and early care of the young. In all youths the greatest comfort and nurturing love were connected with the mother. These revelations and experiences could hardly lead to any other choice than the total reverence and deification of the female.

Although The Great Mother is the most important deity, Witches do, generally, recognize many Goddessess and/or Gods and are, therefore, polytheistic. The tenets of Witchcraft are few but all-encompassing, for with three simple Universal Observations all of life can be explained and understood:

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1) Reincarnation - Mortality
2) Cause & Effect - Magick
3) Retribution - Morality

Reincarnation enlightens the Witch to the fact that, as we come to this material world over and over in a series of learning periods, or lifetimes, we will eventually have to experience all things, be all things, understand all things. This creates a great tolerance for other viewpoints in the Witch.

Cause & Effect, and an understanding of it, allows the Witch to see what makes the world work and how to live most efficiently. It gives them a great advantage in that it explains the working of Magick.

Retribution shows the Witch, in graphic terms, that every thought one might have, every action one may take, is returned in like kind. This realization forms the basis of the Moral Code of the Witch.

The Patriarchal Societies which evolved in later times had no tolerance for the Goddess religions and systematically set out to destroy the material vestiges, kill or convert the adherents and wipe out all knowledge of them. They destroyed the temples and other places of worship, desecrated the sacred groves and magickal places, attempted to pervert the old deities, mutilated and totally suppressed sacred art, tore down libraries and burned books, tortured and killed the practitioners of the Old Religions, demeaned, persecuted and oppressed women in general and passed strictly enforced laws which made theirs the State Religion and forbade all other viewpoints.

Despite the centuries of insidious persecution, deliberate destruction and perversions at the hands of the Christian Conspirators, Witchcraft has survived.

COMMON INQUIRIES

I've heard the terms 'White Witch' and 'Black Witch'. Can you explain?

In this connotation, white is referring to Positive, Black is referring to Negative. A White Witch then is someone who tries to do Positive or Good things. Black Witch could be a term used to describe someone who deliberately does Negative or Bad things. A True Witch believes in the Law of Retribution and would never deliberately harm anyone or anything or participate in Negative or Destructive acts.

ŠIs it possible for me to practice Witchcraft and remain a Christian?

No. The Christian Doctrine states, unequivocally, that Christians shall have no other Gods before the Christian God. Christian Doctrine says to believe in any other deities or to practice any other religion is not only evil but should be punished by death, specifically naming Witchcraft. The Christian Doctrine also denies Reincarnation and prescribes punishment for those who practice Magick.

Devil worship?

Witches do not worship the Devil. Witchcraft predates Christianity and does not incorporate a belief in the Christian Devil.

The Wise Ones did deify the Masculine Principle and quite often He was depicted as The Great Horned God; Pan, Cernunnos, the Great Stag, The Green Man. To the Traditional Witch, the Masculine Deity (the Goddess' Consort) is very important, revered and loved. He is the perfect Father, the Lord Protector. The Horned God of the Witches is loving, kind and good.

Don't men have difficulty with a supreme female deity? There are some groups which give equal status to the female and male deities.

Neo-Pagans are, by definition, people who attempt to live with the Old Country Ways in a new, modern day manner. And while, in this modern era, equal status for the deities may be popular, as it relates to Witchcraft it is historically incorrect. Therefore, a group which does not recognize the Goddess as primary deity is not practicing The Ancient Art. Indeed, they, generally, know very little about Witchcraft, despite their claims. Traditional Dualistic Witches do most emphatically believe that women and men are equal, but have no trouble relating to the Goddess. The Male Witch finds great comfort and solace in his Great Mother.

Do I have to join a Coven?

No. It is not necessary nor is it desirable for a great many people. Some people enjoy the support and companionship a Coven provides, others enjoy solitary worship. The Coven, which is an extremely close knit worship group, may not be possible for some because of location, family climate, availability, etc.

Why is Witchcraft secretive?

The horror of the 'Burning Time' is still very real to the Witch. ŠThe past persecutions were severe. Even so, in today's more enlightened society the need for complete secrecy has lessened and many are able to share their beliefs openly. Very few, however, are willing to expose their very personal and private religious expressions to others who may not understand.

What do I have to do to become a Witch?

The answer to this question is very simple. To become a Witch one must follow the religion of Witchcraft. To do this one must believe in the Goddess as primary deity and follow the three basic tenets. How simple! How uncomplicated! How Pagan! Everything else concerning witchcraft is simply minor details. Details that vary from Aspect to Aspect, Coven to Coven and individual to individual. The details are relatively personal. They should not become more important than the basic tenets. If you do not understand, believe and practice Witchcraft, you are not a Witch. No one can make you a Witch. Reading about it can not make you a Witch. An Initiation can not make you a Witch. Saying you are a Witch, one thousand and fifty two times, can not make you a Witch.

In the search for your individual path beware of those who would take advantage of you. Do not fall prey to the unscrupulous charlatans who would swindle you in a monetary sense (mail-order courses, charges for teaching or initiations, vows of poverty, etc.), exploit you sexually or manipulate you for their own personal ego-trips.

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